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Title:

Opening of exhibition by Stephen Skillitzi

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23/11/75

Ms. Harris, Mr. Skillitzi, Ladies and Gentlemen:

If I suddenly break into a passionate defence of democracy, if I suddenly launch a dramatic appeal for campaign funds, or if I start throwing economic facts and figures at you, I hope you will forgive me.

You will realise that I am ravaged by election fever. Some of the symptoms are that the victims start babbling about constitutions and the will of the people as soon as they are introduced, they smile determinedly all the time, kiss all the babies in sight and are completely disoriented.

During the past week, there have been occasions when I have forgotten whether I was in Sydney or Hobart, Mount Gambier or Adelaide. Later today, I take off for Melbourne from where I go on to Canberra, Goulbourn, Cooma and Wagga. Then it's on again to Melbourne, Hobart, Brisbane, Whyalla and Port Pirie.

With such a schedule, the mind cries out for relief. And how better to refresh one's spirit than at this temple of the Arts, with congenial friends, a glass of champagne, fine music and Stephen Skillitzi's masterpieces to admire and enjoy. In this ambience, it is almost possible to forget the business of politics and give oneself over to pure aesthetic indulgence.

With this event, the Festival Centre Gallery comes of age. Since it was opened last year, the management of the Centre has experimented with exhibitions of various kinds. It was soon found that while the Gallery did not show paintings to advantage, it was eminently suitable for displays of arts and crafts. I think you will agree, when we view this exhibition in a while, that the play of light, structure, colour and space provide a setting for works of art that is relaxed and intimate, yet very exciting.

The Gallery has found its feet and this is its first selling exhibition. I am not among those who think that artists should be above all crass commercialism. What would be the point of the Government's subsidising workshops and giving Art grants if the artist's creations have no appeal and cannot sell? I do not expect the Jam Factory to produce works

which would find a ready market in the souvenir shops of Hindley Street. I would hope, however, that the creations of our craftsmen would always contain such qualities of beauty and inspiration that people would want to own them and have them in the places where they live and work.

This Gallery will make their craft accessible to the public. People will be able to come in and browse around at leisure in an atmosphere that is neither daunting nor hard-selling. They will be able to see the best of South Australian and Australian craft - for it is the stated policy of the Festival Centre Trust that the bias here will be towards local goods and local artists.

The Gallery also complements uniquely the activities in the other parts of this complex. The Festival Theatre has taken on a life of its own as a place where people come to relax and play, to enjoy the best in theatrical and musical performances, to see quality paintings and sculpture, and now, to see and buy quality goods as well. I have always envisaged the Festival Theatre as a living, breathing place, enhancing the colour and life of the city. This latest venture of the Trust will enlarge its already existing programme, give an added dimension to its activities and bring to the Centre people who might otherwise not patronise it.

Stephen Skillitzi is a name that is known and respected in art circles both here and overseas. Since obtaining his Master of Fine Arts degree at the University of Massachusetts, he has taught Ceramics in Sydney and exhibited his ceramics and glass in the major cities of Australia. This year he was selected as the Australian representative at the International Glass Blowing Exhibition in Denmark.

I would like to congratulate him on being the first artist to hold a selling exhibition in the Festival Theatre Gallery and I would like to congratulate the Festival Centre Trust on its continuing programme of imaginative innovations. I wish Mr. Skillitzi and the Trust every success and have much pleasure in declaring the exhibition open.

OPENING OF EXHIBITION BY STEPHEN SKILLITZI BY THE PREMIER, MR. DON
DUNSTAN

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